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Senior Executive Intelligence Brief

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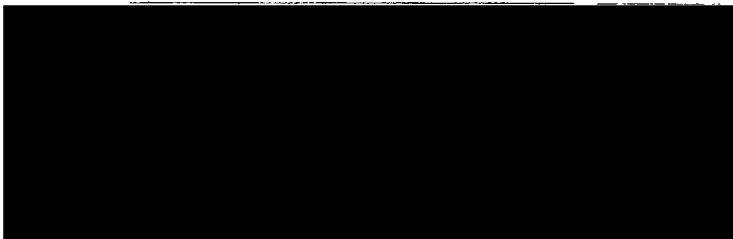


Wednesday, 30 December 1998

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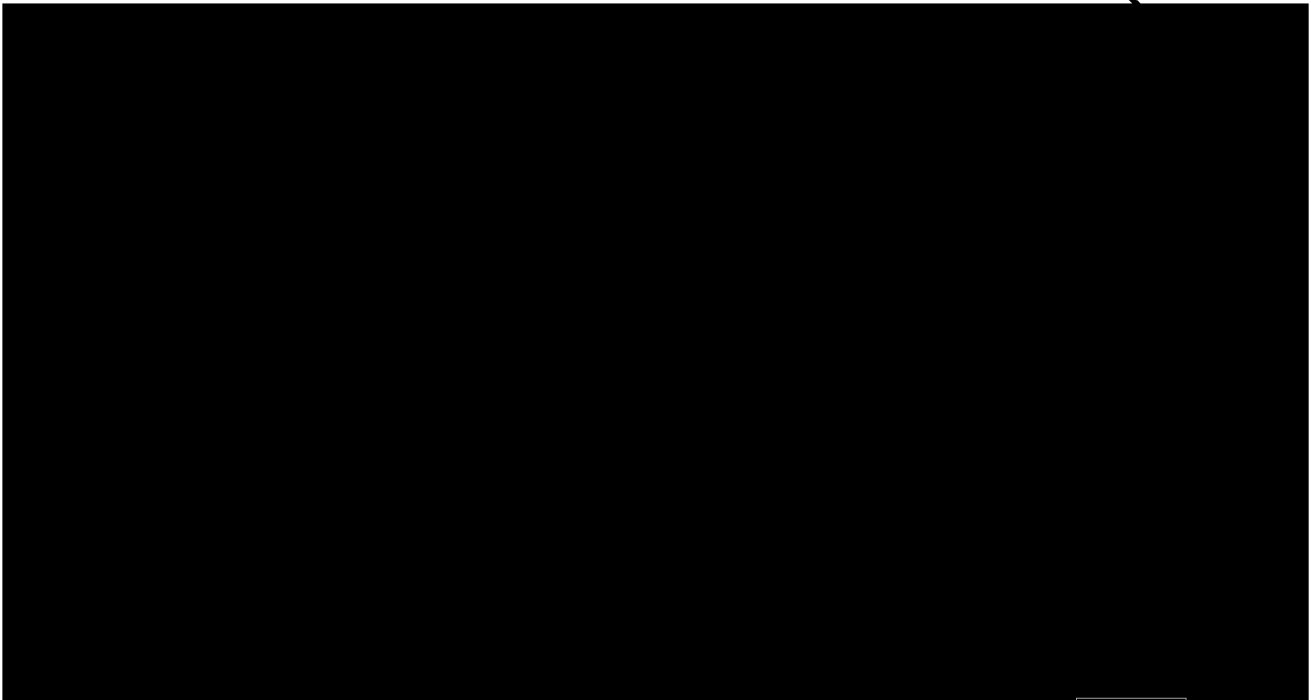


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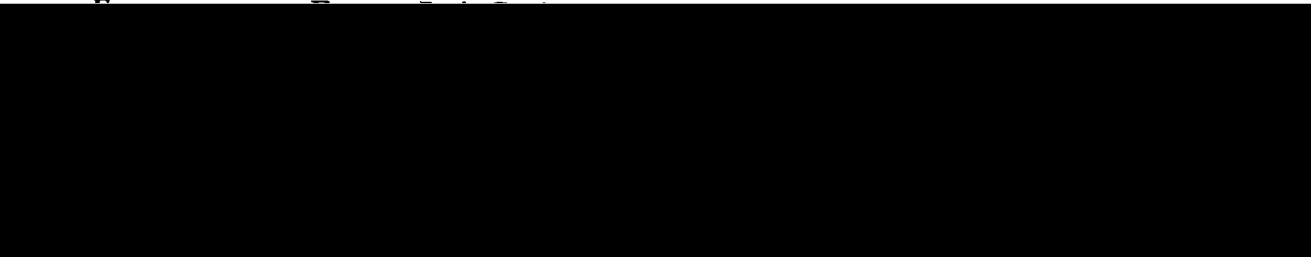
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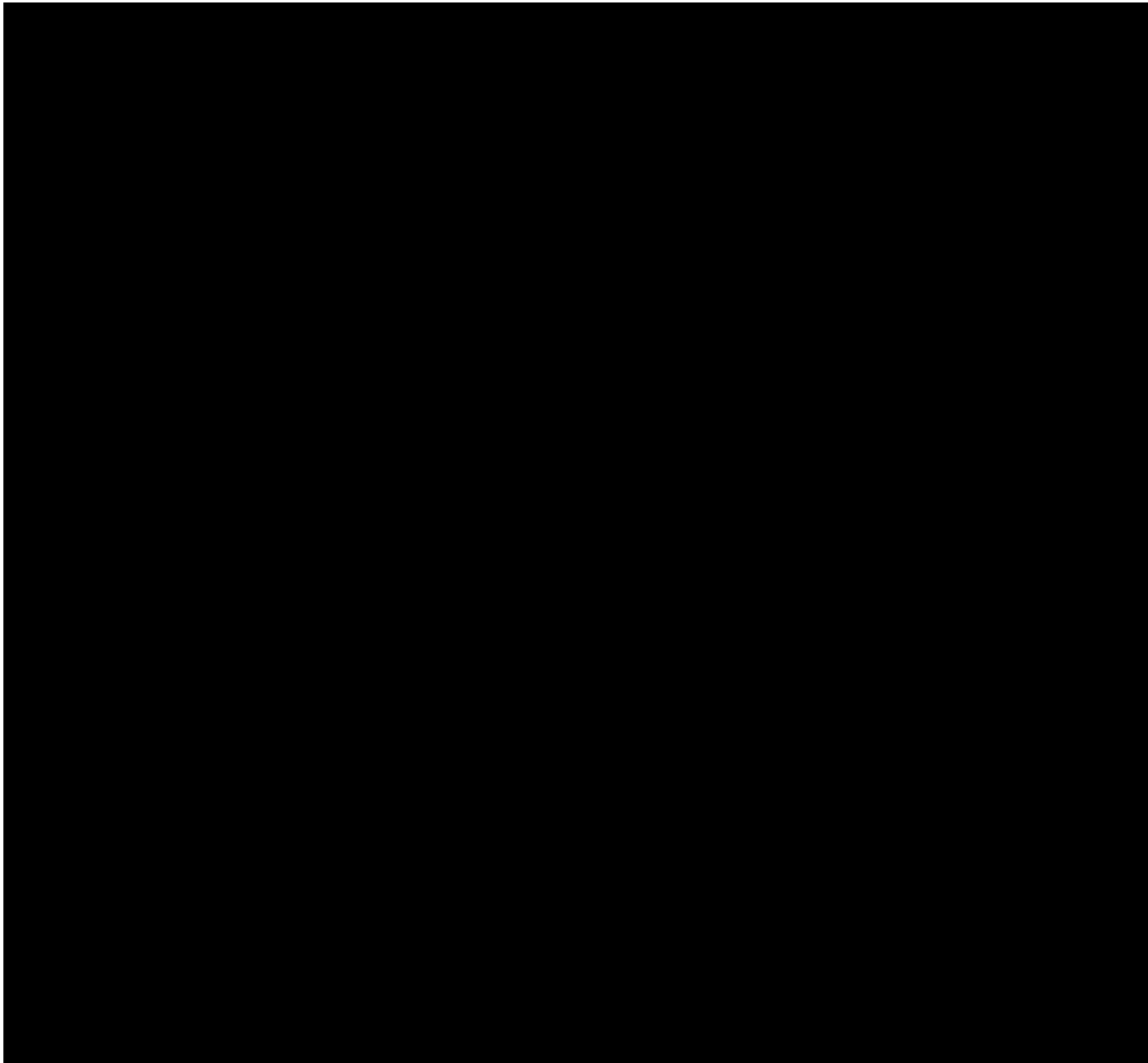
Colombia: FARC Claims To Have Killed Paramilitary Leader

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AMERICAS

Colombia:

FARC Claims To Have Killed Paramilitary Leader

Guerrillas of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) yesterday told a local radio station that they had killed Carlos Castano—the leader of the United Self-Defense Groups of Colombia—and nine others during an attack on Monday. A self-described spokesman for Castano said the paramilitary leader had not been heard from since the attack. Some of Castano's lieutenants claim he is still alive.

- Military authorities have confirmed that a clash took place but say they do not know if Castano was killed.
- *If the FARC did kill Castano, his supporters may launch reprisals that would complicate, and perhaps delay, peace talks scheduled to begin next week between the government and the FARC.*

Castano has sought to push insurgent groups out of longtime strongholds in northern Colombia and has attacked civilians who support the insurgents. Castano in recent months had launched a public relations campaign to secure a role in the nascent peace process, warning subordinates not to interfere with the demilitarized zone set up to facilitate talks and to remain focused on the paramilitaries' long-term interest—getting a seat at the negotiating table.

- Castano's efforts have incensed insurgent leaders, who dismiss him as a murderer and a tool of the state, according to various reports.